

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9745

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 06982

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, GW

SUBJECT: BRITISH AMBASSADOR SIR NICHOLAS HENDERSON

REF: LONDON 6155

1. THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS ARE BASED ON NEARLY THREE YEARS OF ASSOCIATION IN BONN WITH AMBASSADOR SIR NICHOLAS HENDERSON, WHO CONFIRMS HE WILL BE GOING TO PARIS IN THE AUTUMN AS BRITISH AMBASSADOR. SIR NICHOLAS IS A DIPLOMAT CAST IN THE CLASSICAL BRITISH PATTERN, BUT WITH LITTLE OF THE STUFFINESS SOMETIMES ASSOCIATED WITH BRITISH DIPLOMATS OF THE OLD SCHOOL. HIS CAREER HAS FOLLOWED THE USUAL COURSE OF THOSE PROFESSIONAL FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS DESTINED TO RISE TO THE TOP, INCLUDING SOME YEARS AS PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER. BEFORE COMING TO BONN IN THE SUMMER OF 1972, HE HAD COMPLETED FOUR YEARS AS AMBASSADOR TO WARSAW. HE HAD HAD PREVIOUS SERVICE IN AUSTRIA, BUT THIS WAS HIS FIRST ASSIGNMENT TO GERMANY. HE QUICKLY ESTABLISHED A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH ME AND OUR FRENCH COLLEAGE JEAN SAUVARNARGUES (LATER TO BECOME FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER) - A RELATIONSHIP CEMENTED BY THE VERY INTENSIVE PERIOD OF NEGOTIATION IN LATE 1972 OF THE FOUR-POWER DECLARATION WHICH BROUGHT US IN ALMOST DAILY CONTACT FOR A MONTH.

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2. SIR NICHOLAS HAS A FIRST-CLASS, ALTHOUGH NOT BRILLIANT, MIND. HIS DRAFTING STYLE IS FACILE AND FREQUENTLY ELEGANT. WHILE STATIONED IN AUSTRIA, HE WROTE A BIOGRAPHY WHICH HAS BECOME MORE OR LESS STANDARD ON PRINCE EUGEN OF SAVOY. HE CONTINUES TO READ EXTENSIVELY, PARTICULARLY HISTORY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. DESPITE A GENERALLY APPEALING SENSE OF HUMOR, HE HAS HIS IRRITABLE DAYS AND CAN OCCASIONALLY BE QUITE STIFF IN MANNER. WHEN HE GETS AN IDEA WHICH HE THINKS GOOD, HE PURSUES IT ENERGETICALLY, SOMETIMES EVEN BEYOND THE POINT WHERE HIS CAUSE IS LOST.

3. SIR NICHOLAS LIKES TO GO TO PARTIES, AND OBVIOUSLY ENJOYS BEING HOST IN HIS OWN RESIDENCE. HE KNOWS GOOD FOOD AND GOOD WINE, AND IS CONCERNED ABOUT MAINTAINING HIGH CULINARY STANDARDS. WHILE IN BONN, HE HAS ENJOYED THE SERVICES OF EX-KING CONSTANTINE'S FORMER COOK. HE WILL NOT FIND THE GUSTATORY ASPECTS OF SERVICE IN PARIS AN UNDUE BURDEN. IT WOULD BE WRONG, HOWEVER, TO BELIEVE THAT THE SUPERFICIAL IMPRESSION OF DILETTANTISM HE GIVES TO SOME IS CORRECT; THERE IS MUCH SUBSTANCE AND CAPACITY FOR HARD WORK UNDERNEATH. AT 56, SIR NICHOLAS IS A TALL, HEALTHY LOOKING ENGLISHMAN (WHO PLAYS TENNIS WITH ENTHUSIASM), BUT MANAGES - NO MATTER HOW EXPENSIVE HIS OUTFIT - TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF DISHEVELMENT. A LOCAL CRITIC CLAIMS THAT HE ARRANGES HIS DISARRAY, INCLUDING A NECKTIE ALWAYS ASKEW, WITH GREAT CARE BEFORE APPEARING IN PUBLIC.

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4. LADY HENDERSON (MARY) IS A HIGHLY INTELLIGENT WOMAN OF GREEK BIRTH, WHO WORKED FOR SOME YEARS IN ATHENS AS A CORRESPONDENT FOR TIME MAGAZINE. SHE PROVIDES A GOOD FOIL FOR SIR NICHOLAS; ALTHOUGH HER ENJOYMENT OF THE DIPLOMATIC LIFE IS SOMEWHAT LESS ENTHUSIASTIC THAN HIS. SHE SPEAKS ENGLISH, INCIDENTALLY, COMPLETELY WITHOUT ACCENT.

5. IN BASIC ATTITUDE, SIR NICHOLAS IS STRONGLY PRO-AMERICAN, DATING BACK TO HIS PERIOD OF SERVICE IN WASHINGTON. HE IS WELL INFORMED ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN OUR COUNTRY AND HAS SHOWN SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING OF OUR POSITION IN VIETNAM AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD. HE IS OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN HIS OWN COUNTRY, WHICH HE EVALUATES FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF AN INDEPENDENTLY-MINDED SUPPORTER OF THE CONSERVATIVE POSITION. HE HAS BEEN A STRONG ADVOCATE OF BRITISH MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND HAS NO HESITANCY IN DESCRIBING THE PROSPECT OF BRITISH WITHDRAWAL AS "MADNESS."

6. SIR NICHOLAS HAS EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE PUZZLEMENT ABOUT HIS PROSPECTIVE APPOINTMENT TO PARIS, CLAIMING THAT HE WOULD MUCH PREFER TO REMAIN IN BONN. HE SURMISES THAT SIR OLIVER WRIGHT, AFTER LOSING OUT IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE FIGHT FOR THE PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY SUCCESSORSHIP, WAS ABLE TO ARRANGE BONN AS A CONSOLATION PRIZE FOR HIMSELF, THUS NECESSITATING THE HENDERSON MOVE TO PARIS. WHILE HIS RELATIONS WITH SAUVARNARGUES AND THE NEW FRENCH AMBASSADOR, OLIVIER WORMSER, HAVE BEEN GOOD, I DO NOT DETECT THAT SIR NICHOLAS IS A GREAT LOVER OF THINGS FRENCH OTHER THAN THE PRODUCTS OF BORDEAUX AND BURGUNDY. HE WILL, HOWEVER, DO A HIGHLY COMPETENT AND PROFESSIONAL JOB IN REPRESENTING HIS COUNTRY IN PARIS.
HILLENBRAND

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